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LETTER DATED 15 JANUARY 1997 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a press statement issued on 14 January 1997 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in response to the baseless accusations and statement made by the Sudanese authorities in Khartoum calling for nationwide mobilization and Jihad against Ethiopia.

I also wish to inform you that the Government of Ethiopia will transmit to you the appropriate response to the latest baseless accusation of the Government of Sudan which is circulated as a document of the Security Council (S/1997/32 of 14 January 1997).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Berhanemeskel NEGA
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex

Press statement

No one who has followed closely the activities in foreign policy of the new Ethiopia and of the Federal Democratic Republic can doubt the deep commitment of the country and its peoples to live in peace with its neighbours, including with the Sudan. Nor can it be denied, including by the Sudanese authorities, that Ethiopia has made all the necessary efforts, within the framework of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought (IGAD), to assist in the search for peace in the Sudan. Despite the frustrations encountered so far, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia will continue, along with other members of IGAD, to do whatever is practically possible to help in the resolution of the crisis in the Sudan.

On the other hand, it has also been obvious to all those who follow the developments in our subregion that the Sudanese authorities have shown little respect, not only to their own people, but also to their neighbours, including to Ethiopia. Often this has been reflected in the most blatant forms of acts of destabilization and betrayal of friendship and trust, one instance of which is still before the Security Council. At other times, the insanity in Khartoum takes the form of a call for Jihad against its neighbours, the latest example of which was a declaration issued by the representative of the Sudanese Government in Mogadishu calling for Jihad against Ethiopia. There have been still other occasions when the Sudanese authorities have deemed it useful to ascribe to others the responsibilities for their domestic problems or for their military setbacks.

The latest such attempt by the Sudanese authorities to shift responsibility onto others, which is also accompanied by the beating of the drums of war, with a call for general mobilization and for Jihad, took place on 13 January 1997, following the reported takeover of Kurmuk by the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army. As often happens when the National Islamic Front suffers military defeat, an alibi is being sought by Khartoum by accusing Ethiopia of involvement in military activities against Sudanese troops. It is to be expected that this accusation would be taken by the National Islamic Front Government to the Security Council, with the additional aim of diverting the attention of the Council from the unfinished business before it in connection with a proved case of State-sponsored terrorism and an assassination attempt by Sudanese authorities against a head of State.

At the time of the release of this press statement, the sabre-rattling is continuing in Khartoum and the National Islamic Front authorities are feverishly trying to convince the Sudanese people and the international community that their apparent military debacle was of Ethiopia's making. No one knows better than the Sudanese authorities themselves that the accusation has no basis and that Ethiopia has no hand in what is obviously a military setback suffered by the authorities in Khartoum. It is to be noted that this is not the first time the Sudanese accusatory finger was pointed at Ethiopia over the past two years whenever similar military defeats have been suffered by the Sudanese authorities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia wishes to remind the Sudanese authorities that no useful purpose would be served by striving to externalize what they know too well is an internal military debacle, for which Ethiopia has absolutely no responsibility. It is time for the Sudanese authorities to realize that they cannot always succeed in fooling others and to stop believing that fabrications accompanied by great fanfare will be given the benefit of the doubt and some credence by the international community. This would only hurt the Sudan and would not be in the interest of peace in our subregion.